

# *ANDROMACHE*

*A PLAY*

*In Three Acts*

*By*

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*LONDON WILLIAM HEINEMANN*

*MDCCCC*

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## *PREFATORY LETTER*

*MY DEAR ARCHER,*

*The germ of this play sprang into existence on a certain April day in 1896 which you and I spent chiefly in dragging our reluctant bicycles up the great hills that surround Rivaulx Abbey, and discussing, so far as the blinding rain allowed us, the questions whether all sincere comedies are of necessity cynical, and how often we had had tea since the morning, and how far it would be possible to treat a historical subject loyally and unconventionally on a modern stage. Then we struck (as, I fear, is too often the fate of those who converse with me) on the subject of the lost plays of the Greek tragedians. We talked of the extraordinary variety of plot that the Greek dramatist found in his historical tradition, the force, the fire, the depth and richness of character-play. We thought of the marvellous dramatic possibilities of an age in which actual and living heroes and sages were to be seen moving against a background of primitive superstition and blank savagery, in which the soul of man walked more free from*

## PREFATORY LETTER

trappings than seems ever to have been permitted to it since But I must stop, I see that I am approaching the common pitfall of playwrights who venture upon pretences, and am beginning to prove how good my play ought to be !

What I want to remind you of is this that we agreed that a simple historical play, with as little convention as possible, placed in the Greek Heroic Age, and dealing with one of the ordinary heroic stories, ought to be, will, an interesting experiment Beyond this point, I know, we began to differ You wanted verse and the Greece of the English poets I wanted, above all things, a nearer approach to my conception of the real Greece, the Greece of history and even—dare I say it?—of anthropology ! I recognise your full right to disapprove of every word and every sentiment of this play from the first to the last, but I hope you will not judge me the pleasure of associating your name with at least the inception of the experiment, and thanking you at the same time for the many gifts of friendly encouragement and stimulating suggestion which you have bestowed upon

Yours sincerely,

GILBERT MURRAY

January 1900

*D R A M A T I S P E R S O N A E*

PYRRHUS	<i>Son of Achilles King of Phthia</i>
ANDROMACHEL	<i>Once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy now slave to Pyrrhus</i>
HERMIONE	<i>Daughter of Helen, Queen of Sparta wife to Pyrrhus</i>
MOLOSSUS	<i>Child of Pyrrhus and Andromache</i>
ALCIMEDON or ALCIMUS	<i>An old Captain of Achilles' Myrmidons</i>
ORESTES	<i>Son of Agamemnon, King of Mycenæ now banished for the slaying of his mother, Clytaenæstra</i>
PYLADES	<i>A Prince of Phocis, friend to Orestes</i>
A PRILST OF THETIS	
TWO MAIDS OF HERMIONE	
	<i>Certain Maidens, Myrmidons, Men at Arms</i>

*The Action takes place in Phthia, on the Southern borders of Thessaly, about fifteen years after the Fall of Troy*

# ANDROMACHE

## THE FIRST ACT

SCENE *The coast of Phthia. Rocks at the back, with the sea visible behind them. One of the rocks is a shrine, having niches cut in it for receiving offerings. On the right in front is the Altar of Thetis, shrouded in trees, to the left, a well. A path to the left leads to Pyrrhus' castle, another, far back to the right, leads to the house of the PRIFST. It is the morning twilight, with a faint glimmer of dawn.*

*At the foot of the rock ORESTES is seated in meditation, he carries two spears, and wears the garb of a traveller. An ARMED MAN is moving off the stage at the back, as though going towards the sea, he stops suddenly, listens, and hides behind a rock.*

A

## ANDROMACHE

*Enter, coming up from the sea, PYLADES, armed  
The MAN steps out*

MAN

My lord Pylades

PYLADES

Where have you left him?

MAN

Yonder, by the shrine He bade me go back to  
the ship

PYLADES

[*Crossing to ORESTES*] Is it too late to turn your  
purpose?

ORESTES

[*As though half roused from his reverie*] I seek  
only to see if she is indeed so passing beautiful She  
was, I am sure she was until—— [He pauses

PYLADES

Let me go first and spy out a way for you

ORESTES

[*With sudden recollection*] You think I am still  
mad!

## PYLADES

Nay, no more mad than I, but more quick to anger  
It would be safer for me to go

## ORESTES

You think I am still mad because I dared not say it! I will say it here by the altar [Doggedly] I will see if she is still as she used to be before the day when—[with effort]—I shed my mother's blood, and first saw—

## PYLADES

Speak not Their name, brother You did nought but the gods' plain bidding You see them no more now that you are healed

## ORESTES

"Twas you that feared to name them, not I!

## PYLADES

Nay, you fear nothing, that is why I must fear for you

## ORESTES

What is there to fear for me? Most like I shall come back just as I am

## ANDROMACHE

## PYLADES

That is the one thing that cannot be !

## ORESTES

[*Musingly*] If she is changed as all the world else  
is changed since that time — [Abruptly] I care  
not for the woman I will come back If not —

[*Smiles ambiguously*

## PYLADES

But why go alone, and why venture so much ? Wo  
two could lie hid in tho thicket by the shrine yonder,  
and see her when the women come to pray at sunrise  
And then —

## ORESTES

[With determination, interrupting him] I will go  
alone and see her and speak with her alone ! Hold  
me not, friend ! Leave no man to watch over me  
Keep the ship well hidden, and have twoscore men  
ambushed above the cliff, to hold the path if need  
comes

## PYLADES

There shall be fourscore ever ready to your call,  
night or day

## MAN

[Coming down from path at back] My chief, the dawn is drawing close

## ORESTES

Ay, get you gone before my worshippers come

## PYLADES

As you will, then And Apollo be your guard!

[*Exeunt PYLADES and ARMED MAN* ORESTES  
*wraps his mantle round him and sits in silence*

*Enter from the right, PRIEST of Thetis, with a bowl in his hands He climbs a rock at the back and watches the sunrise*

## PRIEST

Not yet Not quite yet Ah, there it catches the flag-top now the trees —yes, there is the glint far off upon the sea! [Comes down towards the shrine and prays] Hul, Thetis! Accept this wine and honey I bring thee at first touch of dawn Keep thy Priest in wealth and honour, even as I keep thy worship And, as the sunlight drives the things of darkness from thy waters—— [Seeing ORESTES]

Averter of evil! Who is this that has sat through  
the darkness under the Holy Rock? Stranger,  
whence come you here?

ORESTES

From Acarnania Have I sinned in resting here?

PRIEST

No man of Phthia, for his life, would stay here in  
darkness! Saw you not anything?

ORESTES

What should I see?

PRIEST

No changing manifold shapes, is of women or  
winged things?

ORESTES

[*Harshly*] I saw nought but what I have seen on  
a thousand nights. Enough! If I have offended  
any goddess I will make amends.

*[He begins to unfasten a pendant from a gold  
chain that he wears, and moves towards the  
altar]*

PRIEST

Say! There is no blood upon your hands?

ORESTES

I have slain a man

PRIEST

How long since? Is the stain washed off?

ORESTES

Oh, I have been purified and purified!

PRIEST

Duly and fully—with hyssop and the blood of swine?

ORESTES

With better sacrifices than swine! I am clean enough to make amends to your goddess [Coming across to the shrine] Where shall I lay it? For I may need her favour [Holds out the gold pendant

PRIEST

[Surprised] Gold! Stranger, it is well to give gold to Thetis, but—

ORESTES

Well, I give it to Thetis!

PRIEST

Since a man in Phthia has ever touched gold, save

Pyrrhus himself and the servants of Hermione  
Nor many, I should guess, in Acarnania

## ORESTES

A banished man must have his wealth in little  
compass

## PRIEST

A chain like that should buy an exile's return

## ORESTES

I care not to return

## PRIEST

Are the friends of the dead so bitter against you?

## ORESTES

The friends of the dead are dead, and my friends  
are dead I have none to fear, but I have been  
wronged, my house taken from me, and my father's  
wealth, and the woman that was vowed me to wife  
No more, old man! I am an exile, and I live in  
happier lands than mine own

## PRIEST

Is it in Phthia you seek for a happy land? No  
matter affliction comes, to the good is to the evil

ORESTES

Why, what ails your city, if a stranger may know?

PRIEST

See you that shrine, and the footprint of Thetis in  
the rock? Once it was all covered with offerings!

ORESTES

It is not so well loaded, nor yet so ill Is there no  
worse than that?

PRIEST

Worse? Barren fields and a barren queen, and  
hatred in the house of Achilles!

ORESTES

Is it some sin the King has done?

PRIEST

The King and a woman

ORESTES

[Starting] Has that sin met its punishment?  
Speak plumply, Priest

PRIEST

Long years ago, Pyrrhus brought back from Troy  
a slave woman to share his bed

ORESTES

[*As though reassured*] Hector's wife, Andromache,  
men say

PRIEST

The wife of his father's bitterest enemy! Ay,  
and she was his enemy too, and loathed her life with  
Pyrrhus

ORESTES

They all struggle, these women captives But  
what harm came of it?

PRIEST

She is a foe to the land and to Thetis!

ORESTES

But has he not cast her off? [*With constraint*] Men say he has wedded a new Queen, the daughter of Helen

PRIEST

Oh, the Trojan has not dwelt in the King's house  
these ten years back She begged him for a hut in  
the mountain, and he gave it her

## ORESTES

She begged to be sent away! How was that?

## PRIEST

Why should a woman wish to live in secret, and not be seen? [Slight pause] There be wise women among the barbarians

## ORESTES

Wise in bad drugs and magic, I knew no other wisdom in them

## PRIEST

You have said it! There is a prophet hero who knows of counter charms—I give him three ewes for this that I wear—[showing a charm made of wolves' teeth]—else I durst not face her!

## ORESTES

Whom has she chiefly hurt?

## PRIEST

Men say she has waked the dead Hector to come to her across the seas! [He shudders] But for the King, we should have judged her long ago

## ORESTES

Does the new Queen hate her?

PRIEST

Has she not blighted the womb of the Queen?  
There is no heir to Achilles in Achilles' land!

ORESTES

And does Pyrrhus sit still while his Queen is thus wronged?

PRIEST

Cannot a witch blind the eyes? He can see nothing, and will hearken to nothing. Even now he has taken the Trojan woman's bastard with him

ORESTES

Is Pyrrhus away from the land? Where?

PRIEST

He has gone hunting in the hills yonder—[pointing]  
—and down to the fields of the Napyans

ORESTES

When should he return?

PRIEST

To-day, it may be—it is the fifth day of the hunt,  
or perchance the game may keep him some time yet

[Enter ALCIMEDON, L., an old man with spears but no armour, he carries a bunch of violets for Thetis] The witch woman is mad lest any hurt come to the boy!

ALCIMEDON

Health to you, Priest, and discretion to your tongue!

PRIEST

Health I accept, Alcimedon,—discretion to them that need it!

ORESTES

[To the PRIEST] Why, what should bring hurt to the lad?

ALCIMEDON

[Carelessly, passing on] Jealousy stranger Priests and barren women!

[He passes on to the altar, and then to the rock, where he puts his violets

PRIEST

Jealousy!

ORESTES

[Involuntarily] Hermione would never plot against the boy!

[He makes an angry movement after ALCIMEDON

## PRIEST

What jealousy? What need to be jealous of him? He is no true heir. We have a King, and we have a Queen, both of the blood of Zeus, both our two rulers, but heir there is none.

## ALCIMEDON

[*Seeing and handling the gold link*] Ye golden gods, have the sons of Paetus come to Phthia?

## ORESTES

[*In sudden anger*] The curse of the crawling lichen on the man who moves that gold!

## ALCIMEDON

On your own head! [*Throws gold quickly down*] Who are you, stranger, to curse one that has done you no wrong?

## ORESTES

I check the wrong before it is done. And I tell not my name save to my host after I have eaten and slept.

## ALCIMEDON

If you come to teach your manners to the Myrmidons, by Thetis' you shall learn them first. Is the stranger yours, O Priest?

## ORESTES

I have broken no man's bread nor touched his hand [Defiantly] What see you more?

## ALCIMEDON

Why is he so bold? Has he sanctuary with Thetis?

## ORESTES

[*Lifting his two spears*] This is my sanctuary  
And there is more gold for the man that will break through it

## PRIEST

Stay! Stay not the stranger so fast, Alcimedon  
Reason with him He will give up the chain, and we will let him go in peace

## ALCIMEDON

Go in peace, when he has lifted his spear against Alcimedon! How shall I look my grandchildren in the face? By Thetis! I will wash the chain with his blood!

## PRIEST

Beware, he has spears! It is man to man

[*Noise of footsteps* ORESTES puts his back towards a rock, so that neither he nor ALCI-

MEDON sees ANDROMACHE, the MAID, and two other damsels, who enter with pitchers on their heads

ALCIMEDON

[With his eye on ORESTES] Ha! who comes there?  
 [Calling to the newcomers without looking at them]  
 A stranger in arms, and with gold! Ho! My  
 midons!

ANDROMACHE

Shame on you, Alcimedon, robber of strangers!

ALCIMEDON

Is it you? [Yielding reluctantly] Nay, he is no  
 man's guest, it is lawful to slay him

ANDROMACHE

He is mine [To ORESTES] Stranger, give me  
 your right hand [To ALCIMEDON] He is my guest

ORESTES

[Still stormy and excited] Shall I take a woman's  
 hand for fear of this old loon? My spear-blade is  
 dry and has not drunk

PRIEST

Stranger, you are alone, a wise man chooses  
 peace, and not war

## ORESTES

Alone? As a wolf among sheep is alone When he slays first the dog—[*pointing spear at ALCIMEDON*] —and bleeds the sheep as he will!

## ANDROMACHE

And who will be the better when he has bled them? Nay, old friend—[*to ALCIMEDON, who wants to break in, then to ORESTES again*]—though you slay us all, you have but lost the food and shelter we had given you, and the shedder of blood escapes not the Dread Watchers

## ORESTES

[Who had been cooling, starts and threatens her] What know you of the Dread Watchers?

## ANDROMACHE

And there is little glory in the slaying of a woman, and little gun

## ORLIES

[Wildly] What woman? Who are you that taunt me? Priest, is this your witch?

## ALCIMEDON

[Angrily] She is no witch! You lie, both stranger and priest!

ANDROMACHE

I am a bondwoman of the King

ALCIMEDON

Andromache, once wife of Hector, Prince of Troy

ORESTES

And am I to be the guest of a bondwoman?

ANDROMACHE

There are others of free estate who will take you  
in I only sought to save men's lives

ORESTES

What worth are men's lives? I will be guest to  
none but the King

ANDROMACHE

One of these will guide you, when you will, to  
Pyrrhus' castle

ORESTES

[Relating suddenly] Oh, let me be

[He sits down on a rock, and buries his face in  
his hands]

## ANDROMACHE

[*To ALCIMEDON*] The man is very weary and sore at heart, Alcimedon

## PRIEST

It may be he is mad It is well we hurt him not

## ALCIMEDON

Banishment may make a man well-nigh mad I remember the year of my own manslaying

## ANDROMACHE

Perchance he has been long alone in the forests Take him and give him food and drink

## ALCIMEDON

The priest can take him I want no more of the man

## ORESTES

[*Wearily*] Nay, touch me not Leave me awhile

## PRIEST

[*To the others*] It is well Make your prayers

## ANDROMACHE

[*Approaching the altar, and praying with upstretched*

*hands*] Greeting to thee and joy, Thetis, mother of all Phthia! Give us peace in this land, and grant that my son Molossus return safe, and grow to give joy to thee and all this house!

## ALCIMEDON

[*In the same way*] Joy to thee, Thetis! Accept my offerings, and grant that my arms keep strong, and that I find the man whose swine have trampled my barley field

## MAID

It will be a long day before Thetis grants you that, old man

## ALCIMEDON

[*Grumbling*] If I only knew of any one that knew!

## PRIEST

[*To FIRST MAID*] Have you a prayer to make?

## MAID

[*Taking offerings from other MAIDS to add to his own.*] Hail, Thetis! and may joy be ever with thee! Accept these offerings from the bondmaids Aithra, and Phloe, and Deianassa, and grant all good things to them and theirs

{A pause}

## ALCIMEDON

The jade! She is praying in silence! Ho, stop her, Priest!

[*The others giggle*

## MAID

'Tis as good as a witch's prayer, at the worst!

## ALCIMEDON

[*Taking hold of her and threatening her with the shaft of his spear*] Say it aloud, now! Say what it was!

## MAID

I won't! I won't! Let me be It was no harm

## ANDROMACHE

Let her be

## ALCIMEDON

Swear it was nothing touching me, nor my crops, nor those swine!

## MAID

By Thetis! I think not of you, nor your crops nor your swine!

## ORESTES

[*Recovering from his reverie*] Well, lead me in I will be the guest of any that will take me

## PRIEST

You have given an offering, stranger, you may  
pray if you will

## ORESTES

I—to Thetis! No! Yet perhaps— [Going up  
*to altar*] Hail, Thetis! I have given thee an offer-  
ing of many oxen's price, and many more will I give  
if thou hinder me not of my desires

## ALCIMEDON

A vile prayer, a very dangerous prayer! He might  
as well have prayed silently I will not take the  
man, the Priest may take him

[The PRIEST goes towards ORESTES]

## ORESTES

[Looking about and scanning the faces] I will be  
this bondwoman's guest

## ANDROMACHE

So be it, stranger [The PRIEST moves anxiously  
towards ORESTES] And perchance the Priest will  
give you shelter till my work is done

## PRIEST

Av, come with me When the King returns it

were meetier that he should take you [Aside to ORESTES] Beware, stranger! It is the Phrygian woman

## ORESTES

[Apart to PRIEST] She is over-wise, methinks, but not evil I fear her not [Coming back as though on impulse] I give you my hand, wife of Hector!

## ANDROMACHE

It is well, my guest [Taking his hand]

## PRIEST

Till the King returns!

[Exit PRIEST and ORESTES]

## ALCIMEDON

[As ANDROMACHE and the women draw water at the well] Lazy hounds, to let Hector's wife draw water! Fill her pails for her, little foxes!

## FIRST MAID

Better she fill mine! Perhaps she knows charms for filling them

## ANDROMACHE

It is well, fellow slave Let our work be even

*Enter, by the path from the Castle, HERMIONE, with two attendants carrying libations She does not notice the slaves*

ALCIMEDON

Greeting, O Queen

HERMIONE

Greeting, old man [Going up to the altar] Hail, Thetis, and have joy! Accept this wine and the blood of an ewe with two limbs that I bring to thee, and take off from me, I beseech—— [She stops, looks round, and sees ANDROMACHE, on whom she turns with vehemence] You?

[Flings out the blood on the ground

ALCIMEDON

Queen, you have flung out the blood upon the ground!

HERMIONE

What would my sacrifice profit, with that woman's eyes upon me? [To ANDROMACHE] Get you back to the castle! Is the water not drawn yet?

ANDROMACHE

I go, O Queen!

ALCIMEDON

You are over-proud, my Queen, over-proud

HERMIONE

May a Queen in Phthia not give commands to her own slaves?

MAID

[*At the shrine*] Holy Aphrodite! some one has put gold upon the shrine!

ALCIMEDON

"Twas a stranger that the Priest has taken in  
Have a care the dog laid a curse on any who should move it

HERMIONE

A stranger! He comes from the South, then, from Athens, or Argos, or Mycen'e——

ALCIMEDON

No, Queen, he is only in Acarnanian But belike he has journeyed to the South

HERMIONE

That is no Acarnanian gold! [*Taking it up*] See you the sea-beast wrought on it, with many feet?

[*To Maid*

MAID

Yes, but the curse, Queen——

HERMIONE

[*Not heeding her*] It brings my home back to me  
In Lacedemon we all wore chains of gold about our  
necks

MAID

Queen, the man laid a curse upon it!

HERMIONE

[*Putting it back*] I meant no evil, and that dear  
gold of the South will never hurt me—— In Aga-  
memnon's palace the men had gold in their armour,  
and even in the blades of their swords! And the  
gold was wrought into lions and wild bulls and trees,  
and strange sea beasts like this

ALCIMEDON

A plain haft and a plain blade cuts the steadiest

HERMIONE

[*Angrily*] Bah! You deem because you are nude  
you are valiant, Alcimedon! The soldiers of the  
South were as brave as you

## ALCIMEDON

[*Turning away towards the maidens*] Let not Andromache draw the water, jades!

## HERMIONE

Will you not draw for her yourself, old man?

## ALCIMEDON

I drew water! [*Drawing himself up in indignation*] By Heimes! I care not for the tongue of a barren woman

[*Voice and the loud talk of huntsmen are heard outside*

## VOICE OF MOLOSSUS

Ho! Mother, Mother!

## MAID

[*Looking*] It is Molossus! And the King's huntsmen They are coming up the path

## ALCIMEDON

Already!

## HERMIONE

[*To ANDROMACHE, who has stopped*] Why do you wait? Have I not bidden you back to the castle?

And when the hall is swept, go to your own house  
 Come not up to trouble the King till that web is  
 finished

## ANDROMACHE

[*Turning again and moving away*] I go, O Queen

## VOICE OF PYRRHUS

[*Outside*] Ho, wife of Hector, mother of Molossus !  
 Stay, and look at him

Molossus and Pyrrhus enter, with some spearmen,  
 Pyrrhus has his arm on the neck of Molossus

## MOLOSSUS

[*Running forward*] Mother, look ! I have slain a  
 man !

## PYRRHUS

He has slain his first man

[Molossus holds up his hands, the palms of  
 which are smeared with blood]

## MOLOSSUS

See, mother, they have smeared me with his  
 blood !

## HELMONE

[*Holding aloof*] Keep away from the altar, with  
 foul hands !

## ANDROMACHE

[To PYRRHUS, with reproach, while she embraces MOLOSSUS] You said you would take him to no battles, only to hunting

## PYRRHUS

[Cheerily] By Hermes, it was he who made the battle! I meant nothing but hunting

## ALCIMEDON

Well done, boy! A true prince, a true prince!

## PYRRHUS

We had driven the deer down over the mountains and we came on a herd of the Neapolitan cattle grazing, right up on the moors

## ANDROMACHE

You promised me you would raid no cattle with him

## PYRRHUS

By Hermes! They *came* to us! And the herd-boy never saw us, he was sitting on a stone in the sun, and thinking of nothing. And even then I would not raid the cattle. When suddenly up jumped the herd-boy and looked at us, with his mouth open

And before he knew who we were, I heard a twang!  
—and there he was with an arrow in his neck!

[Laughs]

MOLLOSSUS

Right through his throat, mother! He was looking up [Imitating the attitude] And I have got a pipe he was plaiting It wasn't finished, but it blows

[He shows a pipe made of reeds

PYRRHUS

You can play better things than pipes, my boy  
So we ran down and cut off the cattle, and I have given them to Molossus for his own herd

MOLLOSSUS

And father put the blood on my hands himself

PYRRHUS

I will do more for you than that, my firstborn

HERMIONE

[Who has leapt back, by the altar] Take up your pitcher, and begone, woman!

PYRRHUS

[Turning upon HERMIONE] Now, by Pelens, daughter of Helen, what would you?

## HERMIONE

That when my slave is gone you may give me greeting

## PYRRHUS

I give you greeting But I praise not your greeting to me

## HERMIONE

If I send my women to draw water at sunrise, shall the water not be back when the shadows are thus?

*[Pointing to shadows]*

## PYRRHUS

There be other women meetier to draw water than Hector's wife I tell you there is no man on this earth I should so joy to have slain as Hector

## HERMIONE

If he had witchwork to help him, he may have been a deadly fighter

## ANDROMACHE

*[To PYRRHUS, who has laid his hand on her shoulder ]*  
Nay, master, the hall must be made ready

## PYRRHUS

Well, take our boy, and be with him at the castle when I come Stay, think of a boon to ask of me in

return for the day's good work And make it a rich  
boon, I shall not stint you

## ANDROMACHE

I know it now, but I fear to anger my lord

## PYRRHUS

Ask on, yet I would not have you ask for freedom  
from me

## ANDROMACHE

My master, what could I do now with freedom?  
Only suffer Molossus to make atonement to the  
Napaeans for the man he slew He may give back the  
oxen, and I will add of my own

## PYRRHUS

[*Displeased*] Atonement! Who are the Napaeans  
to seek atonement from me?

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, my lord, it was scarce a righteous slaying

## PYRRHUS

Not righteous! [Scornfully] Then perchance  
you would have me cut off the herd boy's hands

and feet, for fear his ghost should come after us? Not righteous! What is it you fear?

## ANDROMACHE

[Putting her hand on Molossus' shoulder] He is but a boy, my lord! And if there is no atonement, they will watch day and night to slay him

## MOLOSSUS

Mother, I fear them not!

## ANDROMACHE

They will raid us again—

## PYRRHUS

I can do them twice and four times the hurt they can do me

## ANDROMACHE

They cannot hurt us in our castle, but they can burn the villages in the plain and make dearth and famine

## MOLOSSUS

Oh, Mother, why should I make atonement for my first man?

## PYRRHUS

It was only a boy, too I cannot ask forgiveness for one boy!

## ANDROMACHE

It will cost little I have three carpets of Sidon  
work—

## PYRRHUS

And the oxen! I have given them to the lad,  
and one is already eaten Well, well, it is for the  
lad to say if he will give back his oxen and ask for  
pardon

## HERMIONE

*[With a ring of emotion in her voice]* Shall my  
chests be made empty because your slave's child is  
afraid?

## MOLOSSUS

I am not afraid I will never atone!

## PYRRHUS

*[To HERMIONE]* Peace, O Queen! *[To ANDROMACHE]* Go! If Molossus wills, he can make his  
atonement On to the castle men!

*[Exeunt spearmen]*

## ANDROMACHE

*[Turning as she goes off]* Be not wroth, my King  
Your hall would be very desolate if the boy were  
slain

*[Exeunt ANDROMACHE and MOLOSSUS]*

## HERMIONE

There is another atonement should come first if you must humble yourself

## PYRRHUS

[*Stopping as he is going off*] What other?

## HERMIONE

Atone to Orestes, Agamemnon's son, that you stole away his bride!

## PYRRHUS

[*Flinging up and laying his hand on his dagger*] Daughter of a dog! I stole no man's bride

## HERMIONE

Was I not vowed and sworn to Orestes?

## PYRRHUS

Your father vowed you, not I. What is it to me if your father broke his oaths?

## HERMIONE

You helped him and bribed him to break them. The wrath of the Broken Oath is on both of you!

## PYRRHUS

You are mad, woman Orestes had murdered his mother, and the Spirits without Name haunted him day and night——

## HERMIONE

My father knew that when he betrothed me He could be purified

## PYRRHUS

[Scornfully] Purified? For slaying his mother?

## HERMIONE

And you, you dared not enter the land while Agamemnon's son was there, you waited till——

## PYRRHUS

'Twas your father cozened Orestes away How should I see Agamemnon's son? Am I not the son of Achilles?

## HERMIONE

And was Achilles a better man than Agamemnon?

## PYRRHUS

All the world knows he was

## HERMIONE

Then why did all the world choose Agamemnon to be their king?

## PYRRHUS

Bah! Very feeble men may be kings

## HERMIONE

They may, in Phthia, and beggarly men, and savage, and witch ridden, and makers of atonement, and stealers of wives!

## PYRRHUS

By Peleus! if I stole you, you were willing 'Tis yourself you mark with a dog's name, Helen's daughter!

## HERMIONE

God be witness, willing I never was! Though I dreamed not then that I should come to a beggared land and the house of a master who hated me!

*[Flings herself down by the altar, hidden from the back of the stage by the trees]*

## PYRRHUS

By Thetis, woman, you are bewitched!

## HERMIONE

*[With a cry]* Bewitched! Have I not said it?

*Enter from R back, PRIEST and ORESTES*

PRIEST

[To ORESTES] Here is the King himself! [To PYRRHUS] Son of Achilles, I bring you this stranger, whom your handmaid, Andromache, commended to my care

PYRRHUS

Whence comes he, and what seeks he?

PRIEST

From Acarnania, banished for the slaying of a man

PYRRHUS

He seeks not purification?

ORESTES

The blood is fated long ago from my hand I seek but to rest a while at your castle, I will give payment either in battle with your enemies, or by tidings and songs from beyond Parnassus and the Waters of Pelops

[HERMIONE looks up in amazement at the voice,  
uttering a stifled cry and peers round

PYRRHUS

It is well stranger Tidings are good in peace,

and if war comes, an exile for manslaying may well  
be worth the bread he eats

## ORESTES

Others know if I am skilled in war I know only  
that my life is little worth to me, and I care not  
much to save it

## PYRRHUS

A good word, Sir Guest, and worthy of the roof of  
Achilles We give you greeting, my Queen and I  
[*Shakes his hand, and looks round for HERMIONE*] Daugter of Helen, have you not seen our guest?

## HERMIONE

[*In a startled tone*] Seen him? What do you  
mean, my lord?

## ORESTES

Nay, though methinks I have heard the Queen's  
praises till it is almost as though I knew her For  
the women of the South speak daily of Helen's  
daughter, and the birds and kings' sons will never  
forget her

## HERMIONE

[*Mastering her agitation with difficulty*] You know  
the land of Pelops, stranger? It is a fair land

## ORESTES

Once it was far the fairest upon earth But now  
 its pride is brought down, and that which made it  
 beautiful is departed [He looks steadily at her]

## PYRRHUS

Ay, they have had their troubles in the South  
 Howbeit, with us you may stay in peace as long as  
 your pleasure is Daughter of Helen, give your hand  
 to our guest, and guide him to the castle

## HERMIONE

[Moving her hand forward, then drawing back] Let  
 another guide him I have yet a prayer unspoken,  
 and my offering is poured

## PYRRHUS

[Displeased] Be not vexed, stranger Who can  
 tell the prayers of a childless woman, save that they  
 change and are very many? Come with me, and  
 to-morrow we will ask your name and race

[Exeunt PYRRHUS and ORESTES, L The PRIEST  
 looks to the niches in the rock to see the offer-  
 ings HERMIONE falls on her knees at the  
 altar, and prays silently

## THE SECOND ACT

SCENE *The Hall of Pyrrhus' Castle, a rude stone building, with spears, swords, and armour hanging on the walls A doorway in the back wall leads to the courtyard At the extreme right is a fire burning, near it are two high seats for the King and Queen*

*On a bench near the door are ANDROMACHE and Molossus seated, on the floor near them is a small pile of carpets and tapestries, and a bowl with some metal ornaments and small weapons in it*

ANDROMACHE

But when you saw him fall, and saw the pain in his face, did it give you no grief?

MOLLOSSUS

A little, it may be Not more than when I struck

my first deer A child might cry over the ox they  
are slaying now in the yard

## ANDROMACHE

And a grown man, too, if it waited anything

## MOLOSSUS

Mother, you are but a woman, and I am getting  
to be a man, I must grow past all that and throw it  
behind me

*Enter ORESTES unnoticed he stands in the doorway,  
leaning against a pillar*

## ANDROMACHE

May your eyes never see half the pain mine  
have seen! I grew past feeling for it too, long, long  
ago I saw men writhe and bite the dust, without  
caring for them or counting them They were so  
many that they were all confused, and the noise of  
their anguish was like the crying of ewes far off,  
there was no one voice in it, and no meaning And  
then, as it went on growing, and the sons of Priam  
died about me and the folk starved and my husband,  
Hector, was slain with torment, all the voices gathered  
again together and seemed as one voice, that cried to  
my heart so that it understood

## MOLOSSUS

What did it say, mother?

## ANDROMACHE

It spoke in a language that you know not, my son

## MOLOSSUS

Did it speak Phrygian?

## ANDROMACHE

It spoke the language of old, old men, and those  
whose gods have deserted them

[ORESTES moves forward as though to speak, but  
checks himself]

## MOLOSSUS

But you could tell me what it said

## ANDROMACHE

[Looking at him, and not answering] Why did you  
ever wish to kill that herd-boy?

## MOLOSSUS

We had taken their cattle before They always  
fight us

## ANDROMACHE

Would it not be better that they should live at peace with you?

## MOLOSSUS

Why should I fear their blood-feud? I would sooner be slain than ask favours of them. My father would avenge me well!

## ANDROMACHE

And who will be the happier? Listen. Can you hear that little beating sound—down seaward, away from the sun?

## MOLOSSUS

It is the water lapping against the rocks.

## ANDROMACHE

There is a sound like that in the language I told you of. Old, old men, and those whose gods have deserted them, hear it in their hearts—the sound of all the blood that men have spilt and the tears they have shed, lapping against great rocks, in shadow, away from the sun.

H.

## MOLOSSUS

Again t' mother, no warrior hears any sound like my heart so

## ANDROMACHE

Hector learnt to hear it before he died

## ORESTES

[Coming forward] Before he died! Is that its meaning?

## ANDROMACHE

The stranger!

[Tutting]

## ORESTES

Does it mean death, that sound?

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, methinks a man hears it when he has suffered enough, if he has the right ear to hear it

## ORESTES

But it is then that death should come, when a man has suffered enough

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, death should not come for suffering Death should come when there is no hope left for any one thing in the world

## ORESTES

[Broodingly] One thing!

## Molossus

But, Mother, they called Hector "Slayer of Men"  
 I want first to slay many, many men, and many wild  
 beasts, and burn a town, that people may fear me,  
 and call me "Slayer of Men" And after that—after  
 that, I will be merciful, and slay only those I hate

## ANDROMACHE

Shall you hate men still?

## Molossus

If they wrong me! [ANDROMACHE smiles] Shall  
 I not hate them that wrong me? Do you not your  
 self?

## ANDROMACHE

Light of my age, if I hated, how should I live?  
 There are three living souls that I love—you and  
 your father and old Alcimus. And if I hated, whom  
 should I hate more bitterly?

## Molossus

I know my father was your enemy once But  
 what did old Alcimus?

## ANDROMACHE

He was one of the three who slew my little child

## MOLOSSUS

Astyanax? [She nods] I wish Astyanax were alive, mother I would take him hunting — He would have no share, would he, in my heritage?

## ANDROMACHE

I know nothing of that

## MOLOSSUS

And did you never hate them—not at the time?

## ANDROMACHE

[Looking at him, then passing her hand across her face] Oh yes, I hated them!

## MOLOSSUS

But not me! I never did much harm to you

## ANDROMACHE

Some day perhaps you will hurt me worse than any of them, but I shall not hate you

## MOLOSSUS

[After a pause, handling the objects in the bowl] Well, I give you my oath this time, Mother, but I will not atone for my next slaying

*Enter ALCIMEDON and Attendants*

ALCIMEDON

The bull is finished, and a fine beast he was  
 [Seeing the bowl] What is this?

MOLLOSSUS

[Shamefaced] Nothing Some pieces of mother's  
 old stores

ANDROMACHE

The price for the blood of the herd boy

MOLLOSSUS

She made me vow it!

ALCIMEDON

The atonement? That is right I feared that  
 Pyrrhus would be too proud to pay it

MOLLOSSUS

You need not think that I wanted him to pay it!

ALCIMEDON

H'm! That was how I talked once, before I knew  
 what a blood feud we And now I would pay a  
 dead man's weight in silver to be clear of one Of

course, with a stranger it is different, or a man who has no kin [Examining the stores] No need to pry too much, though It was a little boy, they tell me, and poorly clad

## MOLOSSUS

[Almost crying] He was a big boy!—I hate the Napæans, and I will slay more of them!

## ALCIMEDON

There are the oxen as well We have killed two but sorry beasts, both, sorry beasts Any two calves will more than make up for them

## MOLOSSUS

But I hate them!

## ALCIMEDON

I hate them your fill, but make up the feud we must not have Pyrrhus left childless

## MOLOSSUS

What is it to me if Pyrrhus is childless? He can avenge his children

## ALCIMEDON

Peace is better

## MOLOSSUS

[Contemptuously] Peace!

## ORESTES

And what is the road to peace? The hate must eat itself out, till it stays for weariness

## ALCIMEDON

A long road, stranger, too long and too rough to the feet We want peace now!

## ORESTES

How can you get peace now, when the blood is still wet? He may give all his silver and his fine, but he will hate the men whose blood he has drunk, and though they swear by all the gods of their valley, they will hate him And hate will out, in time, one way or another

## MOLOSSUS

If ever they swerve a hair's breadth from their oaths—

## ALCIMEDON

And is there to be no peace at all?

## ORESTES

Peace for this one—[touching Molossus]—when Pyrrhus is childless, or when—

ALCIVEDON

Your words on your own head !

ORESTES

—when the last of the Napæans has gone from  
tho earth

ANDROMACHE

Nay, no peace then

ORESTES

Not for the dead ?

ANDROMACHE

Do not men see the dead forming tho world, and  
hear them call for blood ?

ORESTES

[Excitedly] How know you, woman, that the Dead  
call for blood ? [Gloomily again] When the whole  
of a race is gone there may perhaps be peace

ANDROMACHE

But the whole of a race is never gone Even from  
Troy there are men escaped who may make cities and  
seek for vengeance again And if you blot out all  
the Napæans, there are those beyond the Napæans

who will hate you for that very thing Make peace, swiftly, before you die, my son, lest there be no peace for ever and ever

*Enter HERMIONE, with PRIEST of Thetis and Attendants she is richly dressed, and her eyes bright and anxious She passes up to the two high seats, and takes one She talks with her MAIDS, and ALCIMEDON goes over to her*

### ORESTES

[*Detaching another pendant from his chain*] Woman, you can see men's hearts, and you talk not as these talk Behold, there is no peace, for peace is nothing, there is either Love or Hate [*Throwing pendant into the bowl*] If gold can buy love where hate is, put that to the blood gift!

### HERMIONE.

[*To ORESTES, across the hall*] Sir Stranger, this Priest tells me you are skilled in a bud

### ORESTES

I have little skill in music, but I have journeyed much

### HERMIONE

You can tell us strange tales of your voyages?

## ORESTES

Not of my own But I was telling this boy a tale  
even now

## HERMIONE

Nay, no boys' tales! Andromache, take your son  
and help with the ox flesh [To ORESTES] And sit  
not so far off, among the slaves' seats Tell us some  
man's story

## ORESTES

[Approaching, but bringing Molossus with him,  
while ANDROMACHE goes out] Nay, I will keep the boy  
It is a boy's tale, this, and of little meaning  
But seeing I have begun—— [To Molossus] Have  
you heard of a man that once had a great feud—  
Orestes, Agamemnon's son?

## MOLOSSUS

Who slew his mother, and was driven by——

## PRIEST

Nay, name them not, child, name not those Holy  
Ones

## ALCIMEDON

We love not his name in this house, stranger  
Have you no other tale?

## HERMIONE

[Controlling her excitement] Nay, what hurt is his name? It is only some boy's tale

## ORESTES

He took on him a great feud, greater than he knew  
 For his father called from the dead for vengeance on  
 the woman who had murdered him And the gods  
 called, too, and put voices always about him calling  
 for blood And then they betrayed him!

## MOLOSSUS

Did his father betray him, too?

## ORESTES

Nay, it may be that the voice was not his father's,  
 after all But the gods—

## PRIEST

See that your tongue offend not, stranger!

## ORESTES

So be it Well, in the end he recked not of the  
 gods He cared not how sore they hated him, and  
 cared not if he lived or died

*MOLLOSSUS*

And what did he do ?

*ORESTES*

This is the last story I heard of him, from a Chalcidian man who had been in Sicily

*HERMIONE*

Had he gone so far away ?

*ORESTES*

Beyond the end of Sicily to a kingdom of the Iberians For he vowed that he would be like Paris, and win the most beautiful of all women for his wife, for, you must know, the gods had marred all the world for him, and made it all as ashes in his mouth, except beauty For beauty is immortal, like themselves, and they cannot hurt it So he sought and questioned where that woman might be, and men said she was queen of a land among the Iberians

*HERMIONE*

[*Half divining his meaning*] Had he seen her himself ?

*ORESTES*

Ay, long ago, they said

## HERMIONE

And did he too deem her so fair ?

## ORESTES

[*Looking full at her*] More beautiful than the flowers, and the sunlight, so that in dreams her eyes haunted him

## MOLOSSUS

Well, and what did he do ?

## ORESTES

He took his ship, with a hundred men well armed, and hid them in a bay of Ibleum. And he went up alone to the king's castle and saw the woman. For he was not sure if she was really so beautiful, and wanted to see her again very close. So he stayed in the king's house and made a plot to bear her away.

## MOLOSSUS

But what happened ?

## ORESTES

I said it was but a boy's story. The Chalcidian knew not what had happened. Some said he won the queen to his ship, and fled away, wandering, and some said she told the king of his plotting, and they

slew him there in the banquet hall [A slight pause] So perchance even Orestes has found his peace, or, perchance he is still an outcast man, with a new feud following him

MOLLOSSUS

But I wish I knew

ORESTES

Oh, 'tis a foolish story, without an ending

HERMIONE

[Breaking out from her suspense, recklessly] And a poor fool, your Orestes, whatever befell!

ORESTES

How so? What if he won the woman?

HERMIONE

He only fled on the seas with her, an exiled man, with no comfort Could he not get him a kingdom?

ORESTES

Belike he cared not for a little kingdom, being once robbed of his own great kingdom

HERMIONE

If a high seat is empty, shall not a great king's

son be bold to sit on it? Were his men good soldiers of Mycene?

## ORESTES

Some, of Mycene, who had sieked Troy, some, pirates he had got in his voyaging, all good fighters!

## HERMIONE

Could he not slay that Iberian in his halls, and sit upon his seat?

## ALCIMEDON

By Thetis! that would have been a gallant deed

## PRIEST

Unrighteous, very unrighteous, but doubtless the Iberian would have sinned aginst some god!

## ORESTES.

The Iberians may be brave fighters, I know not  
And he knew of none to help him

## ALCIMEDON

A hundred good Phthians might have tried it

## HERMIONE.

The queen might have had her own friends who would fight for her

## ALCIMEDON

A very foul deed, very foul, but a gallant one !  
 And if she would leave her lord—the hound !—she  
 might well help to slay him !

## ORESTES

He did not seek her for her righteousness, he  
 sought her because her beauty spoke like a god to  
 him !

[A moment's pause A shout of several voices  
 heard in the Court

## ALCIMEDON

What is that shouting ?

[Moves towards door, with Molossus, the Prisoner  
 follows

## HERMIONE

I heard the King's voice in it [To her MAIDS]  
 Go, quick See what has happened [They also go  
 towards the door, leaving HERMIONE and ORESTES alone  
 An instant of silence, then she makes a quick move  
 ment to him ] Oh, speak !

## ORESTES

Either I will take you this night or I will be slain  
 here in the hall !

HERMIONE

Oh, take me, take me! I am half dead with weeping!

ORESTES

You shall weary no more Go forth alone at midnight to the altar of Thetis——

HERMIONE

The altar of Thetis—by night! [She shows fear

ORESTES

What do you fear? [Hermione shudders, but does not answer] You dare not? Then, let it end the other way!

HERMIONE

Dare you slay him?

ORESTES

That is no great thing!

HERMIONE

And the witch, and the witch-child?

[With frightened ferocity

ORESTES

Slay her?

## HERMIONE

You will not? You will not? Oh, then, I dare not go to you!

[ORESTES looks at her with surprise and some repulsion, the women and ALCIMUS return, followed by PYRRHUS and MOLOSSUS, with some armour after them ANDROMACHE and some retainers]

## MAID

A gift for Molossus! The King has given him a helmet and shield and spear!

## MOLOSSUS

And greaves, too, with bronze rims!

## PYRRHUS

Not yet, my boy! [As MOLOSSUS would fit a greave on] Bad luck before a banquet

## ALCIMUS

Wait till the morning, my lad!

## PYRRHUS

[With sudden displeasure, seeing the blood-gifts] What mean all these carpets, and the bowl yonder?

ANDROMACHE

They are gifts for the atonement

PYRRHUS

Atonement—to those dogs!

ANDROMACHE

My King, it was the boon you granted me

PYRRHUS

[*Turning towards Molossus*] The boy never consented!

MOLLOSSUS

I—verily I liked it not—but I gave my word  
Mother made me

PYRRHUS

You have just slain a man, and a woman can  
frighten you to promising your own dishonour?

MOLLOSSUS

She did not frighten me, she—I know not how  
she did it!

HERMIONE

[*With a laugh*] Others can guess well enough how  
she did it!

## FIRST MAID

[*Muttering*] Sorceress!

## SECOND MAID

[*The same*] Phrygian witch!

## ALCIMUS

Hold your peace, little prating foxes!

## FIRST MAID

Oh, we all know she has witched old Alcimedon,  
long ago

## MOLOSSUS

[*Half crying, as Pyrrhus stands gloomily silent*] I would not make atonement to them, Father, for all  
the world!

## PYRRHUS

She has your word now, little fool, and mine  
likewise—By the gods, woman, you have got your  
will, and shamed me in the eyes of all men

## ANDROMACHE

Master, your honour is more to me than mine own  
This thing shames you not, even Alcimedon deemed  
it wise and honourable

ALCIMUS

The boy is very young, if he were a man, behike—

HERMIONE

Is Alcimedon the judge of his lord's honour?

ANDROMACHE

But how should I over seek to hurt your honour?  
Why should I wish it?

PRIEST

[*As Pyrrhus goes silently back to the throne*] A  
burborian woman never forgets a hurt

FIRST MAID

'Tis the spite of a conquered Phrygian

HERMIONE

Let her be, King! She is thinking ever of her  
Hector, and Astyminx whom you slew!

ANDROMACHE

My lord—

PYRRHUS

Peace, peace! She knows well enough that Hector  
is dead—and beyond the seas too Though I were

shamed to the dirt in mine own hall, Hector would not hear of it!

HERMIONE

Are you sure?

PRIEST

Hector himself is buried beyond the seas, but his ghost may have followed your ships to Phthia  
*[Coming up to the throne]* Yet, son of Achilles, though you like not my counsel, there be witches in Phrygia that can wake the dead, and tell them of shame come to their enemies, or of —

ALCIMUS

There be none such in Phthia, old man! And if the dead *should* wake, your prating would even set them to sleep again

*[Laughter, in which PYRRHUS slightly joins*

PYRRHUS

"Tis well said, Alcimedon! These women and priests!

PRIEST

Nay, but I *will* speak!

*[Talks to PYRRHUS, round whom a group gathers, leaving ANDROMACHE alone, and ORESTES near ALCIMEDON]*

## OFLSTES

[ *To Alcimedon* ] Old man, you have seen Helen? Was she more beautiful than your Queen?

## ALCIMUS

[ *Looking towards Hermione, then brightening* ] Nay, this is a woman like mother, Helen was goddesslike, deathless and ageless for ever!

## ORISTES

[ *To himself* ] For Helen I could have done it! Alcimedon, did yonder woman ever do Helen my great wrong, anything meet for vengeance?

## ALCIMUS

Andromache? Why, twas Helen did her all the wrong!

## ORISTES

Even so, and therefore she must have hated her. Did she never seek, think you, to have Helen slain?

## ALCIMUS

I know not! Why, she gave her home and shelter when the folk of Troy sought to stone her.

## ORESTES

[*Brooding*] If she had ever plotted against Helen,  
I could have done it

## PYRRHUS

[*Shaking off the Priest*] Enough enough!—Is  
your stranger in the hall, Andromache?

## ANDROMACHE

He is here, my lord, a man of good counsel,  
methinks, and like to be faithful to his guest oath

## PYRRHUS

He is happily come to a night of festival—Stranger,  
you stand far from the fire

[ORESTES and HERMIONE have been trying to read  
one another's faces. Here ORESTES turns  
bitterly, looks to the suits of armour on the  
wall, and chooses a seat near one]

## ORESTES

Nay, I have a good seat

## PYRRHUS

We will call the baird and be merry

ORESTES

[*Gloomily*] I have heard your baird but now

PRIEST

The stranger makes minstrelsy himself, as many  
chieftains may

ORFSTES

Ay, give me a goblet, and I will sing I am but  
a rude singer, but my songs may perchance be new

PYRRHUS

Take him the wine [*They bring wine and a lyre*

ORESTES

There are two songs running in my ears this hour  
past, and I know not fully even yet which of the  
two is better

PYRRHUS

Let it be something joyful, meet for a feast day

ORFSTES

I fancied before that one of my songs was very  
joyful, but now methinks there is no joy at all in  
either

## PYRRHUS

[*After looking at him questioningly for a moment*] Then give us a good straight battle-piece, with no cowards in it, and no slaying by stealth

## ORESTES

[*Excitedly*] That it shall be! No cowards, no slaying by stealth, and a clean, hard fight! Ay, and it is the easier too!

## PRIEST

You will call first upon the god, stranger

## ORESTES

Assuredly, and the god can choose the end of the lay

[*Chanting*

"Lord of Man's hope, whom no man worshippeth,  
Heart of his fears, and burthen of his breath,  
Queller of hate and love, hear, O Most Strong,  
Most Writhful and Unrighteous, hear, O Death!"

## MEN-AT-ARMS

Good words! Good words!

## PRIEST

God avert the omen!

[*He goes and does purifications at the fire*

## ALCIMEDON

On his own head ! By Thetis ! this stranger has  
run over with evil words ever since he came

## PYRRHIUS

Choose another song, Sir Stranger ! Men like not  
the name of Death

## ORESTES

Not death ! Shall I sing of women, then ? They  
come nearest [Chants

" O Light and Shadow of ill things that be,  
O Beauty, wild with wreckage like the sea,  
Say who shall win thee, thou without a name ?  
O Helen, Helen, who shall die for thee ? "

## ALCIMEDON

[Starting up] Now, by Thetis, stranger, in shape  
God has made you kinglike, but within a very fool !

## HERMIONE

[Pitously] My mother Helen never wished the  
men to die !

## ORESTES

My singing mislikes you, old man ? Or is it women  
that like you not ?

## ORESTES

[*Tu anqinq the lyce carelessly and impouising*  
 "Great were our sues, and feeble folk are we!"  
 A strong king and a wise was Æacus,  
 And Zeus his father helped him in his need,  
 And Pelops, Lord of Hellas, loved him well!"

## ALCIMEDON

[*Grumbling*] Æacus was no vassal of Pelops!

## ORESTES

"The son is weaker weaker than the sue!  
 And Pleus he begat, a goodly king,  
 Albeit he stubbed his brother on the sind,  
 And wandered from his house, and begged, and  
 lied,  
 And vowed a goddess held him to her breast"  
*Murmurs in the hall Orestes pauses and*  
*dwells*

## PYRRHUS

[*Under his breath*] Does the man seek for strife?

## ORESTES

"The son is false, false than the sue!"—

## ANDROMACHE

The other men take arms and growl  
 HIRMIONE starts up, clasping her head with  
 both hands, and staring in terror before her  
 OI ESTES stays quietly seated

## ANDROMACHE

[Rushing before PYRRHUS] Your oath, O King!  
 Your pl<sup>c</sup>dgcd hand! He is our gaest!

## PYRRHUS

[Ch<sup>e</sup>ling himself suddenly, then turning upon her]  
 Whose guest? You brought him here—you give the  
 baib to his mocking! [To the men] Back, men!  
 [To ANDROMACHE] Who taught him to revile my  
 house?

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, I have told him nothing

## MAID OF HERMIONE

He has been tell ing homs and hours with the Lady  
 Andromache

## ANDROMACHE

I know him not I think he is mad

## BOTW MAIDS OR HERMIONE

Bewitched, perchance!

[Humours of assent and dissent]

## PYRRHUS

Peace, hounds! [To ORLSTES] Sir Guest, this woman has saved you, else, oath or no oath, had I slain you where you stand!

## HERMIONE

[Starting from her stupefaction] What is that in the bowl?

## PYRRHUS

What bowl?

## HERMIONE

The bowl of your blood gifts

[Pointing to it]

## PYRRHUS

*My blood gifts!* [Goes to the bowl, then turns furiously on ANDROMACHE] Woman, who give you this gold?

## ANDROMACHE

No man gave me gold The stranger cast a pendant of his chain to add to the blood gifts, for pity, lest the boy should be slain

## PYRRHUS

Pity of the boy!—'Tis a plot—a plot to shame me past all enduring!

## FIRST MAID

She witched the gold out of him !

## PRIEST

King, King, hear me ! She has witched the Queen's womb long ago, and witched the whole harvest . She has this day witched your own boy to consent to your dishonour , she has witched this mad stranger to give her gold worth twenty oxen , yea, she has witched both him and you, so that he stands up and flouts you in your hall . You are stripped naked, O King, for men and dogs to walk upon, that Hector in his grave may be merry !—Judgment, O son of Achilles, judgment !

## ANDROMACHE

Yea, judgment, my King ! I, too, crave judgment  
Only let not these be my judges—

## PRIEST

Who is she to say how she shall be judged ?

## ANDROMACHE

Judge me yourself, O Pyrrhus, son of Achilles ! even now, in your anger , and I fear not . Oh, my King, you who know me, say if I have hated you !

## PRIEST

A witch has no right to speak Let her be bound outside at the gate till she is judged

## ALCIMEDON

Not speak? What law is this, Priest?

## PRIEST

Not a witch! She will bind the King's heart, so that he cannot judge her

## PYRRHUS

[*After a moment's hesitation*] By Zeus in heaven, it is the truth! I cannot judge her while she stands looking at me Begone, woman!—Nay, touch her not!—Let her go to her own house

## ANDROMACHE

I go, my King Yet if you stay me and to-morrow wake sorrowful, bethink you there is no cure for that sorrow!

[*Exit ANDROMACHE*

## MOLOSSUS

Mother, I will come too!

## ALCIMEDON

[*Stopping MOLOSSUS at the door*] To sanctuary!

Not to your own house! Take sanctuary, both, at  
the altar of Thetis, till his fury is over

[Exit Molossus]

ORESTES

[Who during the interruption has mounted on  
the bench, taken the suit of arms from the  
wall, and armed himself, here leaps down,  
picks up the lyre, and sings again—

“The son is viler, viler than the sire!”

ALCIMEDON

The man is armed!

ORESTES

[Continuing amid general confusion

‘Achilles’ son slew women and slew babes,  
But quailed before the blood wrath of a churl,  
And stole mother’s bride, and fled, fled, fled!’

[Tumult in hall]

ALCIMEDON

Down with him!

PYRRHUS

Slay him not! Break his spear and thrust him  
out!

## ORESTES

Will nothing sting you? Lo, mine was the bride  
he stole, and from me he fled! For he dured not face  
the wrath of Orestes, nor the spear of Agamemnon's  
son

## PYRRHUS

Orestes!

## PRIEST

Is it Orestes?

## ALCIMEDON

He must have men behind him! To the watch-tower quick!  
[Two retainers run out, r

## HERMIONE

He lies, he lies! Do I not know Orestes?

## PYRRHUS

Is it not Orestes? Who is it?

## HERMIONE

This is some poor half-mad, wandering minstrel  
man I know him not He is not Orestes!

## A VOICE FROM THE WATCH TOWER

There are no men near the castle

## ALCIMEDON

Well, strike him down !

## HERMIONE

What profit to break the guest-oath for such as he ? He is not Orestes !

## PYRRHUS

Now, the Furies that haunt Orestes dog you, woman if you lie !

[ORESTES gives a cry]

## PRIEST

If he be mad, it were a great sin to slay him And the god has been strong in him to day

## HERMIONE

[After gazing at ORESTES steadily] May the Furies that haunt Orestes be over with me if I lie [Recklessly] Is that enough ? If you would have another oath, behold, I will go this night to the altar of Thetis —

## PYRRHUS

Hush, Queen, lest the goddess hear !

## HERMIONE

[Continuing] And there by the altar I will swear oaths, and Thetis may work upon me what she will !

## PIRRUS

Nay, daughter of Helen, no such wild words! I mistrust you not—Guest, get you gone in peace

## ORLSTES

[*Subduced by mention of the Furies*] I go, not fearing you, but lest I see Them I am no guest of yours [Throwing down armour] Take back your shield and helmet Aught else I have hid from your hands, my gold will more than repay [With honor] Apollo, Averter of Evil! keep them back!—Oh, why did you not slay me while you might?

[*Exit ORESTES*

## A RETAINER

Shall we not stone him from the Court?

## PRIEST

He is possessed! Stricken of God! Touch him not if you fear the gods' anger

## HERMIONE

[*Terrorified, staring in front of her*] No, no, I see nothing!

END OF THE SECOND ACT

## THE THIRD ACT

SCE<sup>N</sup>E As in Act I Night ANDROMACHE on the steps of the altar of Thetis, with MOLOSSUS asleep Enter from the back, one after another, three armed men, with bows and arrows as well as spears, they pass silently behind rocks or bushes and disappear Enter ORESTES, armed, by path at back a MAN comes from behind a rock to meet him

ORESTES

Is the w<sup>t</sup>ch set?

MAN AT ARMS

Everywhere

ORESTES

And the path to the smp safe?

MAN AT ARMS

Yes We have but to wait till they are drawn off from the castle

ORESTES

Which way will Pylades lure them?

MAN AT-ARMS

He will feign flight northwards, to leave our way clear to the ship

ORESTES

Good One thing more If I be stricken here, waste no men's lives for me Make your way back to the ship

MAN-AT-ARMS

Prince, we have our orders for this night's work from Pylades We leave you not

ORESTES

Nay, what worth is a dead body, or who can hurt it?

MAN-AT-ARMS

Hush! What was that?

*Steals back to his ambush ANDROMACHE has made some movement ORESTES peers towards Castle, L, in darkness, then, turning, sees that there is a woman at the altar*

ORESTES

Daughter of Helen, why at the altar? Whom do

you fear so sore? [No answer He comes nearer and sees Molossus lying] What does the boy here?

## ANDROMACHE

It is the stranger! Come you to seek me, or what more has chaneed?

## ORESTES

Is it you? You?—Is the boy asleep?

## ANDROMACHE

We have waited here so long, and have heard no word, good or evil

## ORESTES

But why hide you here?

## ANDROMACHE

We have taken sanctuary from the wrath of the King and Queen, my guest

## ORESTES

Call you me still your guest?

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, you are still my guest till you leave the land, and the King's wrath will perchance be cooled to-morrow

## ORESTES

Why did you not let them slay me in the hall?  
 'Twas your own folly I sought no hurt to you  
 Speak, think you an altar will hold me back, or your  
 blood stain deeper than my mother's blood?

## ANDROMACHE

Who are you that speak like this? And what will  
 my death profit you?

## ORESTES

Spoke I not loud enough in my enemy's hall? I  
 am Orestes

## ANDROMACHE

[Amazed] Clytaemnestra's son! [Coming towards  
 him] Oh, now I understand your face! Give me your  
 hand Whether that old stain be yet purged or  
 no——

## ORESTES

'Tis hidden and buried, rather, with much new  
 blood over it [Keeping back his hand

## ANDROMACHE

It is such a one as you I have long prayed for, to  
 be a friend to my child and me

## ANDROMACHE

## ORFSTES

Why should I be your friend? I want no friends

## ANDROMACHE

Listen You and I have had more grief than others We have seen beyond the glory of battle, beyond the joy of the conqueror and the shame of the conquered—<sup>—</sup> Paris and Hector saw before they died

## ORFSTES

I know the battle, and I know the shame I have seen nought else

## ANDROMACHE

The King has had but little sorrow, he has conquered always, and taken glory in his misdealing

## ORFSTES

Behold he will soon taste the other side of glory

## ANDROMACHE

It may be But none he e, <sup>s</sup>we old Alcimus, knowught of suffering I have long prayed that some man should come here who had suffered from the hurts he had done, and learnt to pity men and

women And if the King's feet are set fast and cannot be turned, at least there is my son

## ORESTES

Woman, I am come to slay the King and your son !

## ANDROMACHE

[Calmly] Slay them ? But why ? Why ?

## ORESTES

To take their kingdom, as others have taken mine !

## ANDROMACHE

But is all the grief wasted that the gods have sent you ? Can you not forget past evils and live in peace ?

## ORESTES

In storm I can forget them Peace is all anguish to me

## ANDROMACHE

And what will a kingdom profit you ?

## ORESTES

I am a king's son, I must have my kingdom

## ANDROMACHE

Oh, you kings and kings' sons, you dwell like wolves in your castles I have heard many a ploughman at his ploughing sing with gladness, but seldom, seldom, a king's son

## ORESTES

Wolves must live in the wolves' way, and they have their own gladness, too

## ANDROMACHE

You may know them by the howling of their misery in the night! God grant my boy may never be a king!

## ORESTES

Shall I slay him, then, as they bid me? Or would you that I should take him away, where there are no kingdoms? My ship is in the bay, and lacks not for plunder

## ANDROMACHE

Better that you should slay him now, where he lies

## ORESTES

Is he asleep? [He bends tenderly over MOLOSSUS, then recovers himself, and speaks in a harsh troubled voice] Why is it that you fear me not?

*ANDROMACHE*

Why should I fear you?

*ORESTES*

Do you trust to these gods? For I reck little  
of them

*ANDROMACHE*

Nay, my gods are vanished and powerless long ago,  
and these are but my enemies' gods

*ORESTES*

Then what defence have you against me?

*ANDROMACHE*

I need no defence You and I are friends

*ORESTES*

How, friends! I am charged to slay you also

*ANDROMACHE*

You will not slay me

*ORESTES*

How can you know what I myself know not yet?

## ANDROMACHE

You have no peace to see your own heart, but I  
can see it

## ORESTES

How have you learnt it?—Woman, they may well  
speak of your sorceries!

## ANDROMACHE

I have no sorceries. This is a simple thing. We  
slaves learn to read men's moods in their eyes and  
voices, because their moods bring life or death to us.

## ORESTES

Then why do you not fear me the more? [Roughly]  
You have never seen my heart!

## ANDROMACHE

He who has seen beyond the glory of bloodshedding  
may soon see beyond the hardness of man's heart.

## ORESTES

[Troubled—roughly] I know my own heart!

## ANDROMACHE

The gods' hearts may be hard, but man's is tender,

only very hungry, and sore afraid, and wild as a hunted beast on the mountain

## ORESTES

Know you your Queen's heart?

## ANDROMACHE

Not bad, but starving. And she thinks, perchance,  
that the grief of others will feed it

## ORESTES

[Absent—bending and touching the boy's hands]  
He is very cold

*Enter HERMIONE, hooded and wrapped, hurriedly*

## HERMIONE

[To herself] Is there no one?—Oh, I dare not!

[ORESTES steps quickly out from behind the trees]

HERMIONE starts in terror

## ORESTES

Welcome, daughter of Helen!

[HERMIONE does not answer, but stands, breathing  
hard with relief]

*ANDROMACHE*

ORESTES

Throw back your hood — Ye gods, she is passing  
beautiful!

HERMIONE

Take me quick to the ship Quick, quick!

ORESTES

It is not yet time My men must draw Pyrrhus  
away from the castle

HERMIONE

He has gone Nay, take me quick—Orestes—

ORESTES

Why do you tremble so? What is it?

HERMIONE

That oath I swore—

ORESTES

You have not heard Them?

HERMIONE

I know not There seemed shapes at the edge of  
the trees

## ORESTES

Shapes! [Looks at her close] No, you have not seen them

## HERMIONE

[With horror] Is the sight of them written on men's faces?

## ORESTES

Speak not of them!—You have neither seen nor heard

## HERMIONE

It is only now, and here, that I am afraid Take me to the ship now, and when once it is over—

## ORESTES

When Pyrrhus is slain?

## HERMIONE

And the other—[clinging to him]—oh, then we shall be safe and at peace

## ORESTES

The boy? Why do you fear him?

## HERMIONE

[Absentmindedly] The boy? He is the king's son

ORESTES

But why do you *fear* him?

HERMIONE

It is not the boy I fear

ORESTES

Who, then?

HERMIONE

It is the woman

ORESTES

[*Repelled*] And what fear you from *her*? I care not to slay a woman and a child

HERMIONE

I can never breathe in peace while she is there!

ORESTES

[*Sternly*] What has she done?

HERMIONE

[*Speaking in vague, troubled tones*] When she is near me, even if I know it not, her breath runs in my blood and makes me tremble [She is trembling]

## ORESTES

Be still! Say what she has done If she has done you a wrong I will slay her

## HERMIONE

[*In the same way*] I might have borne her eyes perchance in my own country, with friends near me, but here, all alone——

## ORESTES

What has she done?

## HERMIONE

[*In the same way*] I meant no hurt to her for her sharing the king's bed But when first I saw her and she looked strught into me, there was something that turned my heart sick and dimmed my eyes

## ORESTES

How can I slay her for dreams like these? I know nought of your heart, but I can see your beauty She has not hurt that

## HERMIONE

Can you not see a dimness over my face, where it once was bright—and a radiance in hers?

ORESTES

[*Reflecting*] There is a radiance, although she is so sad

HERMIONE

Where get she that radiance? It is not hers. It is the joy and sunlight she has sucked out of me!

ORESTES

[*Looking at her coldly*] I can see no cloud in your face

HERMIONE

[*Passionately*] No, no, you cannot see. I am retting, shrivelling, dying within, and only she can see how I die!

ORESTES

All flesh must decay. Tell me one deed of hate she has done, and I will slay her.

HERMIONE

She has made me childless, that her child may be king!

ORESTES

[*To himself*] And Helen never faded at all

HERMIONE

Childless, barren—barren of womb and of heart!

—I had courage and strength to be good sons,  
till she sapped it from me to feed her son Nay,  
there is another thing——

## ORESTES

[Coldly] What?

## Hermione

No, no, you do not believe me! I cannot say it

## ORESTES

You speak such wild things

## HERMIONE

I know not why I am so wild now, and anger  
you—When she is near, it makes me wild and  
cruel, but now, I know not why this should come  
over me

## ORESTES

Great Zeus! if it should be true!—Andromache,  
Andromache, speak and answer her

## HERMIONE

Is she here? [ANDROMACHE comes out from the trees  
by the altar] Averter of Evil, what is that?

## ANDROMACHE

I am but your handmaid, I have done you no hurt

## HERMIONE

Nay, now you can see it—the thing I dared not say!

## ORESTES

What is it?

## HERMIONE

She is no live woman! See! she is dead and sucks the blood of the living Why is she not afraid, like a live woman?

## ORESTES

[*Troubled*] She is deathly white Why she has no fear I know not

## ANDROMACHE

What can I answer? The King might slay me, but not this man

## ORESTES

It was the same but now, when I held death over her

## HERMIONE

She has passed through death! She has no fear, no anger, as the living have Why does she never

ask for anything? [Almost beside herself with terror] Faugh! the smell of death clings about all her garments! Kill her, kill her! [ORESTES looks at HERMIONE with a shudder HERMIONE, breaking down, continues] Oh, friend, friend, I was not like this in Sparta

## ANDROMACHE

Queen, I know my heart is with the dead of Troy  
Why should that anger you?

## ORESTES

[Looking at HERMIONE] In very truth there is a shadow come over you You seem to be shrunken, and scarce so wondrous beautiful

## HERMIONE

[In a weary frightened voice] Kill her, kill her!

## ORESTES

I know not—

## HERMIONE

You have eyes Can you not see there is a fiend working in me?

## ANDROMACHE

There is no fiend Queen, Queen, why are you so full of hate?

HERMIONE

'Tis your spells have done it! Before I came here  
I never hated any one

ORESTES

[To ANDROMACHE] Know you not any excuse why  
she should hate you?

ANDROMACHE

Nay, stranger, why do men hate?

HERMIONE

She has made me feel that I am vile Slay her, or  
I go back to the King

ORESTES

Pylades most like is dead If I do slay her will  
you come away with me?

HERMIONE

Away? To the ship? Yes, till we come back  
and take the kingdom!

ORESTES

I will not take your kingdom!

HERMIONE

Is it the boy you fear to slay?

## ORESTES

My kingdom must be an ever changing kingdom  
I dreamed for an hour that I might stay and rest like  
other men

## HERMIONE

And why not?

## ORESTES

There be Those watching that will not let me rest

## HERMIONE

Those watching? But you have not seen them?  
I have not seen anything! [To herself]

## ORESTES

Not now Few men have ever seen them, but I  
hear their wings on the wind And perchance if I  
stayed long in one place——

## HERMIONE

I hear nothing [Listening] No, it cannot be  
wings on the wind! Oh!

## ANDROMACHE

Nay, there is no sound at all Be not so terrified

## HERMIONE

I cannot stay here alone! Oh, I care not for the kingdom

## ORESTES

We are exiles for ever, both!

## HERMIONE

Nay, if you love me I can beu anything, if any one will love me

## ORESTES

I know not if I love or hate you It was for your passing beauty I came, because your eyes beckoned me through the dark of the sea

## HERMIONE

Oh, take me, that is all the love I want!

## ORESTES

Like those two stars that men call Helen's brethren immortal, never fading—

## HERMIONE

Oh, I am fading fast, but, perchance, if the spell were off me—

## ORESTES

Nay, you shall never fade There is a blue sunlit  
island, waterless, desolate— Heli me, daughter of  
Helen, ageless and deathless!

## HERMIONE

I hear

## ORESTES

Some sunset when you are beautiful like a dream  
I will set you on that bright island, and fill my eyes  
full And then I will go my ways alone, and the  
fairest of earthly things shall be mine for ever

## HERMIONE

What do you mean?

## ORESTES

No man shall ever see you fade from your loveliness The gods may take you even as they took  
Helen

## ANDROMACHE

Oh, he is mad! Queen, Queen, go back while  
there is time

## HERMIONE

[*Shrinking back*] I should die! I am afraid!

## ORESTES

Die? Of that I know not. Only never, never  
fade, perfect for ever without age or waining!  
Daughter of Helen, will you come with me?

[*A sound of arms outside. They start.*

## HERMIONE

Oh, quick! I am yours. Do with me what you  
will.

## ORESTES

Come [Sound again] What is that?

## VOICE OF PYRRHUS

Andromache! Ho! snake of Phrygia, starve at  
the altar if you will! Your plotters are all fled!

[ORESTES stands in posture of defence. HERMIONE  
shinks back]

## ANDROMACHE

[To Molossus] Cling fast! [Rushing from the  
altar towards Pyrrhus] Back, my king! Keep  
back!

## HERMIONE

[To Orestes, with a cry] Now, now!

[Hides her face]

MOLLOSSUS

[*Waking up slowly*] Is that father coming?

PYRRHUS

[*Entering and grasping Andromache*] Think you  
to die so easily? You shall speak first and tell all!

ANDROMACHE

There is an ambush! Keep back!

[*Pyrrhus stands with his sword drawn over her*

PYRRHUS

[*Looking up*] More treachery?

ORESTES

Why is the son of Achilles away from the battle?

PYRRHUS

You? Pirate! Because your men fled so fast and  
so far My servants have chased them twenty fur-  
longs from here Yield!

ORESTES

[*Loud*] No man shoot nor stir! [As before] Your  
Myrmidons may be twenty furlongs from here, my

men are in these thickets to right and left What sought you here? Was it to slay Andromache?

## PYRRHUS

I sought that when I came Now I need more

*[He poises his spear]* ANDROMACHE slips back  
to Molossus at the altar

## ORESTES

*[Not raising his spear]* Nay, it was I that should have slain Andromache Go your ways! I only take back my own bride

*[Pointing to HERMIONE, whom PYRRHUS now sees for the first time]*

## PYRRHUS

It is Orestes!—But the queen vowed— And that oath! Oh, perjured! perjured!

## HERMIONE

*[To the rocks and thickets]* O ye in the ambush, strike him down! Strike him down! Oh, what is that rushing on the wind?

*[Puts her hands over her ears as though in terror]*

## ORESTES

The oath is fulfilled upon her !

## ANDROMACHE

[Close to Pyrrhus] My lord, my lord, wait and let him speak It is he that asks you, so there is no dishonour [He glances at her] Nay, you may shun me after if I have done wrong And his men are crowding behind these bushes and rocks

## PYRRHUS

[In a war chant] The wolves set an ambush, set an ambush for the lion, and the lion feasted for many days ! Ho, Myrmidons !

## ORESTES

They hear you not Go back !

[He grasps his spear for defence, Pyrrhus draws his sword and starts forward]

## VOICE

[From behind the rocks] Now, men of Mycenae !

[A shower of arrows strikes Pyrrhus]

## ANDROMACHE

It is a murder, a coward's murder !

[Pyrrhus staggers to the altar and falls]

ANDROMACHE bends over, tending him  
Molossus, with a cry, snatches Pyrrhus'  
sword and flies at ORESTES, who disarms him  
at a blow

ORESTES

Hold the boy! Hurt him not!

HELMIONE

[In a stupefied tone] His blood is running down  
the steps of the altar!

PYRRHUS

Where is Molossus? Boy, if you leave these dogs  
unpunished—

ANDROMACHE

Nay, curse him not! Oh, my lord, if you have  
ever loved him, curse him not! Let him be free, he  
will do all that is well

PYRRHUS

[Faintly] Andromache? Ay, then, so be it. It  
is the same in the end. I am glad I did not slay  
you, Andromache. [Dies]

HELMIONE

[Is before] His blood is trickling into the mark of  
the footprint of Thetis! [Wildly] Ah, drag him

away, or it will be a curse upon us! He must not die at the altar!

## ORSTES

I never slew him I will not touch a man dying at an altar Andromache, touch him not, he will haunt you

## HERMIONE

She is not afraid of the haunting of the dead See, she is whispering in his ear She is doing witch work to bring him back [Crossing to ANDROMACHE, who is still bending over Pyrrhus' body, and kneeling to her] Nay, in the goddess's name, Andromache, do not wake him! I have wronged you much, but I will make amends, I will set you free He would never have done that Only, do not whisper to him! Do not call him back to haunt me!

## ANDROMACHE

Hold your peace, traitor and coward! If I could bring him back, think you I would stay my voice for you?

## HERMIONE

O God! And the noise on the wind is nearer and nearer!

## ORESTES

[*To HERMIONE*] You did not slay him Even if he does wake he will only haunt them that slew him

## HERMIONE

He saw them not, he knows them not He has only seen you and me [*Rapidly*] Oh, in God's name it is too much! The sound of Their wings is all about me, and if I dared look, I know I should see Their faces It is more than one woman can bear If he wakes I shall go mad!

## ORESTES

It is done now We will fly in the ship quickly, he will never follow us over the seas

## HERMIONE

[*As before*] She will show him the way! Oh, she will have no pity! I have sought so long to slay her She would not spare me now for all the treasures of Egypt I knew well I should have no peace till I saw her dead —Oh, woman woman! bend not over him, whisper to him no more!

## ANDROMACHE

I will whisper no more, I will cry aloud—in dead

ears, as I have cried all my life ! [To PYRRHUS] O thou who hearest me not, who hast never heard me, I call again to thee, let there at last be peace ! If thou hast found thy sleep, oh, cling to it ! Never wake nor stir to follow these who murdered thee !

## HERMIONE

What does she mean ? It is all magic She means that he is to follow us !

## ANDROMACHE

The living have never heard me, and the dead cannot hear, but broken and dying men know the words that I speak Remember the one moment before utter death, when thine eyes were opened to see and thine ears to hear Remember that, and forget the long waste of days before !

## HERMIONE

She bids him remember !—He will awake I can feel that he will wake and follow us !

## ANDROMACHE

By the bitter hate wherewith once I hated thee , by the blood in the streets of Troy and the death-cry of Hector's child , by the love wherewith I have loved

thee in spite of all—[*the body mores*]—and love thee still—

HERMIONE

[*With a shriek*] O God! He is waking! [*Groelling in terror and hiding her eyes*] Oh, smite off his feet that he shall not pursue, and his hands that he may never lay hold of me!

ANDROMACHE

Before thy soul is fled far away, hearken to me and put away thine hatred

HERMIONE

[*As before*] Smite off his hands and his feet!

ORSTIUS

She is not crying him to waken She is bidding him rest in peace and not harm us

HERMIONE

It cannot be that, it cannot I have hated her too sore It is all witchwork or else madness

[*She looks up and sees the sword, suddenly clutches it and moves towards ANDROMACHE*

ANDROMACHE

And afterward go and seek Hector, and he will

tell thee more, for he was wiser and greater than other men. And some day this woman, too, will be broken and dying, and then she will see what thou and I have seen, and will know what mercy is.

[HERMIONE stabs her] Ah!

[ANDROMACHE falls over the body of PYRRHUS  
ORESTES starts forward and grasps HERMIONE

ORESTES

[To the men holding Molossus] Hold this wild beast! Let the boy free

[ORESTES and Molossus bend together over the body of ANDROMACHE. The men-at-arms seize HERMIONE

MOLLOSSUS

Mother, speak!—Is she dead?

ORESTES

No, but there is death in her face

MOLLOSSUS

Mother, mother, speak!

ORESTES

[Standing up] We know what she would say——

Young King of Phthia, I never sought to slay your father, and for this woman, I would give all my wealth to have her alive again—But I will make atonement take all my gold—[takes off his chain, and throws it at Molossus' feet Molossus stands silent]—and this dagger likewise There is a bright stone in the hilt that keeps off the venom of snakes [Molossus is still silent] And my cloak was woven by women of Sidon [Throws down the cloak]

## MOLOSSUS

[In a struggling sullen voice] It was not you that slew her

## ORESTES

Is it the woman? There is your sword [Picks it up and gives it him To the men holding HERMIONE] Hold back her arms, men, that the King may slay her as he will!

[The men bring forward HERMIONE, dazed and stupefied, they hold her so that either breast or throat may receive the sword

## MOLOSSUS

Oh, take her away, or I will verily slay her! Let her never set foot upon this land again

## ORESTES

Begone with her to the ship!

[*The men move off with her*

## HERMIONE

[*Suddenly struggling*] I will not go! Let me free!  
I will stay and he shall slay me!

[*The men drag her off*

## ORESTES

And for mine own atonement [*He looks round*]  
Men, get you gone!—If you would have more, here  
is my sword, and here is my shield, and my helmet  
[*He lays the arms one by one at MOLOSSUS' feet*]  
My men are all gone The rest is for you to

## MOLOSSUS

[*Looking at ANDROMACHE*] I will  
will have peace

[*Kneels down*]

Peace let it be

## MOLOSSUS

I never saw her looking so full of happiness

## ANDROMACHE

[*Half raising herself, with a radiant smile*] Hector !  
Hector !

THE END